

Group III, claim(s) 15-19, drawn to a catalyst composition comprising the organometal salt.

Group IV, claim(s) 20, drawn to a polymerization process.

The inventions listed as Groups I-IV do not relate to a single general inventive concept under PCT Rule 13.1 because, under PCT Rule 13.2, they lack the same or corresponding special technical features for the following reasons: they do not share any common technical features since (i) the organometallic compound of formula (III) of Group I is different from the common technical feature of the organometal salt of formula (VII) of Groups II-IV, and (ii) the common technical feature the organometal salt of formula (VII) of Groups II-IV is taught in Resconi et al. (6,608,224), therefore, Groups II-IV do not have any special technical features.

PROVISIONAL ELECTION

Applicant provisionally elects Group I, drawn to an organometal complex. Claims 1 - 8 are readable on the elected invention.

TRAVERSAL

Applicants respectfully traverse the Examiner's restriction requirement.

In particular, Applicant traverses the Examiner's contention that pending claims 1-20 lack a single inventive concept under PCT Rule 13.1.

Applicant previously appealed an invitation to pay additional fees at the European Patent Office (herein referred to as the

"EPO"), which stipulated pending claims 1-20 in the European counterpart application of the above captioned application did not satisfy all the requirements for unity of invention. A copy of the protest is submitted herewith as Attachment A.

In the decision rendered by the EPO Board, all the pending European counterpart claims which currently read on pending claims 1-20 for the above captioned application, were grouped into the same groups as outlined by the Examiner. See page 9 of the protest. With regard to segregating the claims into four separate groups, the EPO Board not only delineates the novelty of pending claims 1-20 over the cited D1 reference (i.e., WO-A-0162764, which is the WO counterpart of U.S. Patent 6,608,224 cited by the Examiner; See Attachment B), but the EPO board additionally states claims 1-20 do in fact form a single general inventive concept under PCT Rule 13.1, thus complying with the unity of invention requirement. See pages 9-14.

Accordingly, in light of the above remarks and enclosed attachments, Applicant respectfully believes the single inventive concept under PCT Rule 13.1 has been satisfied.

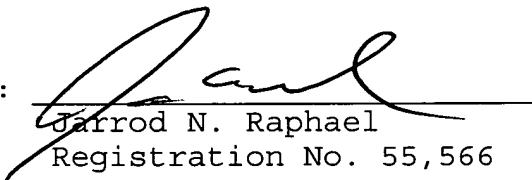
In view of the foregoing, Applicant respectfully requests the Examiner to reconsider and withdraw the restriction requirement and to examine all of the claims pending in this application.

Serial No.: 10/520,565

If the Examiner has any questions or comments regarding this matter, she is welcomed to contact the undersigned practioner at the below-listed number and address.

Respectfully submitted,

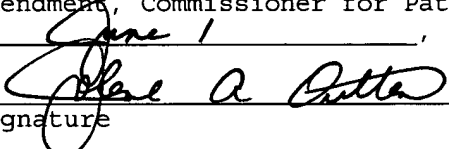
By:


Jarrod N. Raphael
Registration No. 55,566
Customer No. 34872

Date: June 1, 2006
Basell USA Inc.
912 Appleton Road
Elkton, MD 21921
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I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as first class mail in an envelope addressed to: Mail Stop Amendment, Commissioner for Patents, P. O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450 on

June 1, 2006


Signature

June 1 2006
Date

PATENT COOPERATION TREATY

From the INTERNATIONAL SEARCHING AUTHORITY

PCT

To: Basell Poliolefine Italia S.P.A.
 Intellectual Property
 Attn. Colucci, Guiseppe
 P. le G. Donegani 12
 I-44100 Ferrara
 ITALY



I.P.

- 4 APR 2005

RECEIVED

NOTIFICATION OF DECISION ON PROTEST

(PCT Rule 40.2(c) and (e) and
 Administrative Instructions, Section 502)

Date of mailing
 (day/month/year) 30-03-2005

Applicant's or agent's file reference

FE6033 PGU

IMPORTANT NOTIFICATION

International application No.

PCT/EP 03/14437

International filing date

(day/month/year) 09-07-2003

Applicant

BASELL POLYOLEFINE GMBH

The applicant is hereby notified that this International Searching Authority, after having examined the protest on the payment of the additional fee(s), has reached the decision indicated below.

1. ☒ The protest is found justified to the extent that:

a. ☒ total reimbursement of the additional fee(s) and any protest fee paid will be made in due course.

b. ☐ partial reimbursement in the amount of _____ (amount/currency)
 will be made in due course for the following reason(s):

2. ☐ The protest is found unjustified and the additional fee(s) and any protest fee paid will not be refunded for the following reason(s):

ATTENTION

The applicant should notify the International Bureau promptly if he wishes a copy of the protest and the decision thereon to be sent to the designated Offices.

A copy of this notification has been sent to the International Bureau.

Name and mailing address of the ISA/

European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentplan 2
 NL - 3280 HV Rijswijk - Tel. +31 - 70 - 3402040

Authorized officer

Christina Eickhoff

Facsimile No. +31 - 70 - 340 3016

Telephone No. +49 - 89 - 2399 3371



Case Number: W 0038/04 - 3.3.3

International Application No. PCT/EP 03/007485

D E C I S I O N
of the Technical Board of Appeal 3.3.3
of 14 March 2005

Applicant:

BASELL POLYOLEFINE GMBH
Brühler Strasse 60
D-50389 Wesseling (DE)

Representative:

Colucci, Guiseppe
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Subject of this decision:

Protest according to Rule 40.2(c) of the Patent
Cooperation Treaty made by the applicants
against the invitation (payment of additional
fees) of the European Patent Office
(International Searching Authority) dated
9 January 2004.

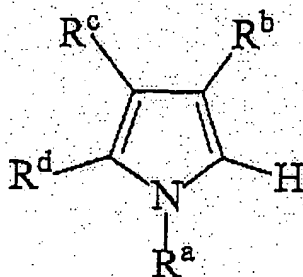
Composition of the Board:

Chairman: R. Young
Members: C. Idez
B. Günzel

Summary of Facts and Submissions

- I. International application PCT/EP03/007485 entitled "Catalyst system for the polymerization of olefins" comprising 20 claims was filed on 9 July 2003.
- II. Independent Claims 1, 9, 15 and 20 of the application as filed read as follows:

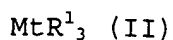
"1. An organometallic compound obtainable by contacting:
a) a compound having the following formula (I):



(I)

wherein:

R^a is a linear or branched, saturated or unsaturated, C₁-C₁₀ alkyl, C₆-C₂₀ aryl, C₇-C₂₀ arylalkyl or C₇-C₂₀ alkylaryl group, optionally containing O, S, N, P, Si or halogen atoms; or R^a can join R^d to form a C₄-C₇ ring; R^b, R^c and R^d, equal to or different from each other, are hydrogen atoms, halogen atoms, linear or branched, saturated or unsaturated, C₁-C₁₀ alkyl, C₆-C₂₀ aryl, C₇-C₂₀ arylalkyl or C₇-C₂₀ alkylaryl groups, optionally containing O, S, N, P, Si or halogen atoms, or two or more adjacent substituents R^b, R^c and R^d form one or more C₄-C₇ rings, optionally containing O, S, N, P or Si atoms, that can bear substituents; with
b) a Lewis acid of formula (II)



wherein Mt is a metal belonging to Group 13 of the Periodic Table of the Elements; R^1 , equal to or different from each other, are halogen atoms, halogenated $\text{C}_6\text{-C}_{20}$ aryl and halogenated $\text{C}_7\text{-C}_{20}$ alkylaryl groups; two R^1 groups can also form with the metal Mt one condensed ring.

9. A salt obtainable by contacting, in any order:

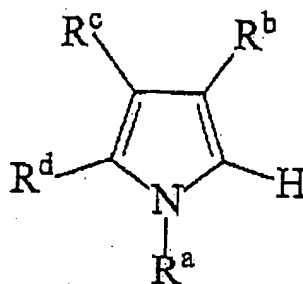
- a) a compound having formula (I) as described in claim 1;
- b) a Lewis acid of formula (II) as described in claim 1; and
- c) a compound of formula KR^f_3 , wherein K is a nitrogen (N) or phosphorous (P) atom; R^f , equal to or different from each other, are linear or branched, saturated or unsaturated, $\text{C}_1\text{-C}_{30}$ alkyl, $\text{C}_6\text{-C}_{20}$ aryl, $\text{C}_7\text{-C}_{20}$ arylalkyl or $\text{C}_7\text{-C}_{20}$ alkylaryl groups, optionally containing O, S, N, P, Si or halogen atoms, or two R^f can form one $\text{C}_4\text{-C}_7$ ring, optionally containing O, S, N, P or Si atoms, that can bear substituents.

15. A catalyst system for the polymerization of olefins comprising the product obtained by contacting:

(A) at least one transition metal organometallic compound, and

(B) an organometallic compound obtainable by contacting:

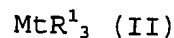
- a) a compound having the following formula (I):



(I)

wherein R^a, R^b, R^c and R^d are described as in claim 1;

b) a Lewis acid of formula (II)



wherein Mt and R¹ are described as in claim 1;

and c) optionally a compound of formula KR^f₃,

wherein K and R^f are described as in claim 9.

20. A process for the polymerization of one or more olefins comprising contacting one or more olefins under polymerization conditions in the presence of a catalyst system as described in claim 15."

Claims 1 to 8 are directly or indirectly dependent on Claim 1 and Claims 10 to 14 are directly or indirectly dependent on Claim 9.

Claims 16 to 19 are dependent on Claim 15.

III. On 9 January 2004 the European Patent Office (EPO), acting as International Searching Authority (ISA), in compliance with Article 17(3)(a) PCT issued an "Invitation to pay Additional Fees" (hereinafter "Invitation") stating that the application contravened the requirements of unity of invention according to Rule 13 PCT and inviting the Applicant to pay, within a time limit of 30 days, 1 additional search fee.

IV. According to the "Invitation" the general concept underlying the claimed subject-matter was an olefin polymerization process employing a group 13 element activator obtainable by contacting a heterocyclic compound according to claim 1 (formula I) of the present application with a compound of said group 13 element according to claim 1 (formula II). The "Invitation" stated that document WO-A-0162764 (hereinafter referred to as D1) described very similar compounds employed as activators obtainable by contacting compounds of formula II with compounds identical to those of formula I save that they were not N-alkyl substituted, but no special technical effect had been demonstrated for the products of the present application over those of D1. According to the "Invitation" the problem relating to the production of these olefin polymers could be solved in various ways, which were linked by the heterocyclic compound mentioned above as same or corresponding feature. In the light of D1, there was, however, no single general inventive concept (Rule 13.1 PCT) and no demonstrated same or corresponding special technical feature (Rule 13.2 PCT) linking the following groups of claims:

Group I: The subject-matter of Claims 1-20 (in part) insofar as any of R^a , R^b , R^c , and R^d in the heterocyclic compound of formula I in Claim 1 does not form part of a C_4 to C_7 ring; and

Group II: the subject-matter of Claims 1-20 (in part) insofar as any of R^a , R^b , R^c , and R^d in the heterocyclic compound of formula I in Claim 1 forms part of a C_4 to C_7 ring.

- V. On 9 February 2004 the Applicant paid under protest this additional search fee and simultaneously requested reimbursement of this fee.

As reasons for its protest, the Appellant, in its letter dated 9 February 2004, argued essentially as follows:

- (i) Document D1 neither mentioned nor suggested that the nitrogen atom could be substituted. Thus, Claim 1 of the present application was novel and inventive over D1.
- (ii) The products of D1 and those of the present application were different products. This could be seen by comparing the structure of formula (III) of D1 and that of formula (III) of the present application, which differed by the position of the ring to which the Lewis base was bound.
- (iii) If one considered D1 as relevant for Claim 1 of the present application, furthermore, it would remain relevant for the compounds belonging to the two groups defined by the Examiner, since the definition of the substituents on the carbon atoms 1, 2 and 3 were the same in D1 and in the present application.
- (iv) The different substitution on the carbon atom 4 was one of the key steps of the present application in combination with the substitution of the nitrogen atom.

(v) Reference was further made to the decision G 1/89 (OJ EPO, 1991, 155), according to which, while the ISA might consider the request of additional fees, this should be done only in clear cases.

VI. On 17 August 2004 the Review Panel of EPO/ISA issued a "Notification regarding Review of Justification for Invitation to pay Additional Search Fees" (hereinafter "Review Notification"), in which the Applicant was invited to pay a protest fee within a time limit of one month.

In paragraph 1 of the "Review Notification", the Applicant was told that after review of the protest the additional search fee should not be reimbursed.

The position of the Review Board (cf. paragraph 2.3) of the Review Notification) can be summarized as follows:

(i) The subject-matter of Claims 1 to 20 of the present application differed from D1 in that the C4N ring was N-alkylated.

(ii) The technical effect of this feature was claimed to be to increase catalyst stability and to reduce the amount of cocatalyst.

(iii) In the absence of comparative data over D1, the technical problem could only be formulated as providing alternative cocatalyst for olefin polymerization.

(iv) The skilled person would surely have considered it a normal option to replace the hydrogen atom of D1, which was a standard chemical group, by an alkyl or aryl group which were also standard chemical groups.

(v) Furthermore the carbon atom 4 could also bear a hydrogen atom according to D1.

(vi) There was no evidence that the group R^a bound to the nitrogen led to a specific technical effect over the compounds of D1.

(vii) Consequently the present activators could not serve as technical feature linking the present inventions.

(viii) Contrary to the submissions of the applicant, D1 was not relevant for all the compounds because the present activators made a contribution over the prior art in that R^a and R^d could be joined to form a C₄-C₇ ring whilst other R substituents might or might not form ring systems on their own.

VII. On 6 September 2004 the Applicant paid the protest fee requested in the "Review Notification". In its letter dated 6 September 2004 announcing the afore-mentioned payment the Applicant submitted the following additional comments:

(i) It was well known that the hydrogen atom of a N-H group could be easily displaced by a Lewis acid, while this reaction was very hard to carry with a N-R group.

(ii) Starting from D1, the skilled person, looking for an alternative cocatalyst, should carry out the following steps in order to arrive at the present invention:

- (a) choose to replace the N-H by a N-R group,
- (b) choose an hydrogen atom as substituent in position 4 of the pyrrole ring;
- (c) obtain a different completely unexpected compound and find it active as cocatalyst.

(iii) D1 did not however suggest these steps.

(iv) If, according to the Examiner, it was a normal option to replace the hydrogen atoms of D1, there would be no basis to select only some replacing groups.

(v) Therefore any replacement described in Claim 1 should have the same weight and consequently D1 was relevant for Claim 1 as a whole.

VIII. The Applicant requested the reimbursement of the additional search fee and of the protest fee which had been paid.

Reasons for the Decision

1. The protest is admissible.
2. As can be deduced from the description, the aim of the present application is the preparation of olefin

polymers in the presence of a metallocene catalyst and of a cocatalyst which could be used in lesser amount than alkylaluminumoxane cocatalysts and which provides a stable catalyst composition. This problem is solved, according to the present application, by using as cocatalyst an organometallic compound obtainable by contacting an heterocyclic compound of formula (I) as set out in claim 1 of the present application with a Lewis acid of formula (II) as set out in Claim 1 of the present application.

3. As indicated above in Section II, the present application comprises 4 independent claims. Thus, in the Board's view, the claims of the present application should be grouped in the following manner:

Group I: Claims 1 to 8 which refer to the organometallic compound *per se*;

Group II: Claims 9 to 14 which refer to a salt obtainable from the organometallic compound.

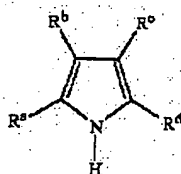
Group III: Claims 15 to 19 which are directed to a catalyst system comprising the organometallic compound; and

Group IV: Claim 20 which refers to a process for olefin polymerization in the presence of a catalyst system comprising the organometallic compound.

4. In the Board's view, the subject-matter of the Group I is conceptually linked by the use of the organometallic compound specified in Claim 1 as cocatalyst with the subject-matter of the Groups II, III and IV. Thus, this

organometallic compound would qualify as common unifying "special technical feature" within the meaning of Rule 13.2. PCT, provided this common concept is novel and has an inventive character.

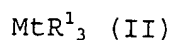
5. In this connection, it has been considered in the "Review Notification" (Section VI above) that the subject-matter of Claim 1 was novel over D1 but that it lacked inventive step in view of this document.
6. Document D1 relates to an organometallic compound obtainable by contacting an heterocyclic compound having the following formula (I):



(I)

wherein R^a , R^b , R^c and R^d , equal to or different from each other, are hydrogen atoms, halogen atoms, linear or branched, saturated or unsaturated, C_1 - C_{10} alkyl, C_6 - C_{20} aryl, C_7 - C_{20} arylalkyl or C_7 - C_{20} alkylaryl group, optionally containing O, S, N, P, Si or halogen atoms, or two or more adjacent substituents R^a , R^b , R^c , and R^d form one or more C_4 - C_7 rings, optionally containing O, S, N, P or Si atoms, that can bear substituents; with

b) a Lewis acid of formula (II)



wherein Mt is a metal belonging to Group 13 of the Periodic Table of the Elements; R^1 , equal to or

different from each other, are halogen atoms, halogenated C₆-C₂₀ aryl and halogenated C₇-C₂₀ alkylaryl groups; two R¹ groups can also form with the metal Mt one condensed ring. (Claim 1).

These organometallic compounds are used as cocatalysts in catalyst system comprising a metallocene catalyst in the polymerization of olefins. They allow a reduction of the amount of cocatalyst used in comparison to that of alkylaluminumoxane cocatalysts and they provide stable catalyst compositions (page 1, lines 7-9; page 3, lines 1 to 6).

7. In view of the formula I given for the heterocyclic component in Claim 1 of D1, it thus evident that the organometallic compounds according to Claim 1 of the present application are novel over those of D1, since the nitrogen atom of the pyrrole ring bears an hydrocarbyl radical instead of an hydrogen atom as disclosed in D1.
8. As indicated above in paragraph 1, the present application in suit is concerned with organometallic compounds and use thereof as cocatalysts in the preparation of olefin polymers in the presence of metallocene catalysts. Such organometallic compounds are known from D1.
9. As indicated in paragraph 6 above, the organometallic compounds disclosed in D1 are used as cocatalysts in the preparation of olefin polymers in the presence of metallocene catalyst and they allow a reduction of the amount of the cocatalyst in comparison to that of alkylaluminumoxanes and they provide stable catalyst

compositions, so that it is evident that D1 deals with the same technical problem as the present application.

10. Thus, starting from D1 and in the absence of comparative data between the organometallic compounds according to the present Claim 1 and those of D1, the technical problem underlying the present application may be seen in the provision of further organometallic compounds useful as cocatalysts in the preparation of olefin polymers in the presence of metallocene catalyst which allow a reduction of the amount of the cocatalyst in comparison to that of alkylaluminoxanes and which provide stable catalyst compositions.
11. The solution proposed in Claim 1 of the present application is to use an heterocyclic compound of formula (I), in which the nitrogen atom is substituted by an hydrocarbyl group, and in which the carbon atom in position 4 bears an hydrogen atom, in the preparation of the organometallic compound.
12. It thus remains to be decided whether the subject-matter of Claim 1 of the present application was obvious to a skilled person in view of D1.
13. In that respect, it has been argued by the Review Board, that the replacement of the hydrogen atom on the nitrogen by an hydrocarbyl group would have represented a normal option to the skilled person seeking to prepare alternative cocatalysts.
14. In this connection, the Board notes, however, that Claim 1 of the present application requires not only that an hydrocarbyl group be present on the nitrogen

atom, but, in addition, that an hydrogen atom be present on the carbon in position 4.

15. These structural changes in the heterocyclic compound have for their consequences that the organometallic compounds obtained have a totally different structure from those obtained in D1, i.e. the metal belonging to the group 13 of the Periodic Table is no longer bound to the nitrogen atom as in D1 but to a carbon atom in an α -position to the nitrogen of the heterocyclic ring.
16. In the Board's view, document D1 would provide no hint to the skilled person that, despite these structural differences in the organometallic compounds, the organometallic compounds according to the present application would still not only work as cocatalysts in metallocene comprising catalyst compositions, but furthermore, that they would allow a reduction of the amount of cocatalyst in respect to alkylaluminoxanes and that they would stabilize such catalyst compositions, since D1 is totally silent on a substitution on the nitrogen atom of the heterocyclic compound, let alone on the influence of such substitution on the cocatalyst activity of the organometallic compound.
17. It thus follows that the subject-matter of Claim 1 of the present application cannot be considered as obvious in view of D1.
18. Consequently, the common concept as defined in paragraph 4 above is novel and inventive over D1 and the subject-matter of Claims 1 to 8, of Claims 9 to 14, of Claims 15 to 19, and of Claim 20 must hence be

considered as so linked as to form a single general inventive concept within the meaning of Rule 13.1 PCT.

19. It thus follows from the above that the reasons given in the "Invitation" do not warrant the proposed lack of unity objection and the Applicant's protest against the payment of one additional search fee is therefore justified.

Order

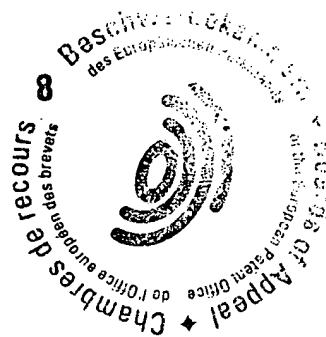
For these reasons it is decided that:

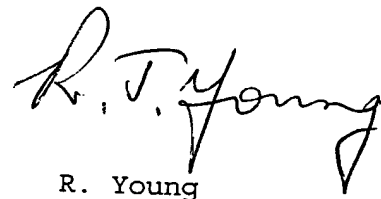
The refund of the additional search fee and the protest fee is ordered.


The Registrar:

The Chairman:


C. Eickhoff




R. Young


C. Eickhoff
Geschäftsstelle
Registry/Große
Besetzung/Certified
Certified conforme:
24. MRZ. 2005

ATTACHMENT B

Family list

22 family members for:

WO0162764

Derived from 17 applications.

- 1 No English title available
Publication info: **AT268779T T** - 2004-06-15
- 2 No English title available
Publication info: **AU783058 B2** - 2005-09-22
- 3 Organometallic compound useful as cocatalyst for polymerizing olefins
Publication info: **AU3737301 A** - 2001-09-03
- 4 "Catalyst system for the polymerization of olefins"
Publication info: **BR0105430 A** - 2002-06-04
- 5 ORGANOMETALLIC COMPOUND USEFUL AS COCATALYST FOR POLYMERIZING OLEFINS
Publication info: **CA2370799 A1** - 2001-08-30
- 6 Organometallic compound useful as cocatalyst for polymerizing olefins
Publication info: **CN1203076C C** - 2005-05-25
CN1366528 A - 2002-08-28
- 7 "Catalyst system for the polymerization of olefins"
Publication info: **DE60103702D D1** - 2004-07-15
- 8 "Catalyst system for the polymerization of olefins"
Publication info: **DE60103702T T2** - 2005-06-23
- 9 ORGANOMETALLIC COMPOUND USEFUL AS COCATALYST FOR POLYMERIZING OLEFINS
Publication info: **EP1173445 A1** - 2002-01-23
EP1173445 B1 - 2004-06-09
- 10 "Catalyst system for the polymerization of olefins"
Publication info: **ES2220725T T3** - 2004-12-16
- 11 "Catalyst system for the polymerization of olefins"
Publication info: **JP2003524013T T** - 2003-08-12
- 12 ORGANOMETALLIC COMPOUND SUITABLE AS COCATALYST IN POLYMERIZATION OF OLEFINS
Publication info: **RU2248980 C2** - 2005-03-27
- 13 "Catalyst system for the polymerization of olefins"
Publication info: **US6608224 B2** - 2003-08-19
US2002038036 A1 - 2002-03-28
- 14 Catalyst system for the polymerization of olefins
Publication info: **US6841501 B2** - 2005-01-11
US2003228976 A1 - 2003-12-11
- 15 Process for the polymerization of olefins
Publication info: **US6878786 B2** - 2005-04-12
US2004030153 A1 - 2004-02-12
- 16 ORGANOMETALLIC COMPOUND USEFUL AS COCATALYST FOR POLYMERIZING OLEFINS
Publication info: **WO0162764 A1** - 2001-08-30
- 17 Organometallic compound useful as cocatalyst for polymerizing olefins.
Publication info: **ZA200108415 A** - 2003-01-13

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